

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

September 15, 2004

The Honorable C.W. Bill Young
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
The Capitol, Room H-218
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As Florida starts to recover from Hurricanes Charley and Frances and braces for the possibility of a blow from Hurricane Ivan, I'd like to thank you for the role you played in the timely passage of the first \$2 billion emergency appropriations package for the Federal Emergency Management Agency that became law last week. I now look forward to working with you to provide funding for a broader range of federal agencies that will speed disaster relief to our state's many hurricane-battered communities.

Last night, the Senate took a positive step in that direction when it passed the Homeland Security Appropriations Bill. Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Ted Stevens indicated that he'll use this bill as the vehicle to pass the president's latest emergency spending request of \$3.1 billion when it reaches conference with the House.

Significant progress toward helping provide emergency assistance to Florida's devastated agriculture industry also was made last night. Even though the president did not include agriculture in his request to Congress, the Senate adopted an amendment to provide \$2.9 billion in much-needed disaster relief for agriculture nationwide, of which Florida can expect to receive up to \$300 million. As I pointed out in my letter to the president on Sept. 10, at least \$1 billion is needed to respond to Florida's agriculture losses. This point was echoed in a bipartisan letter to the president sent by 20 members of Florida's Congressional delegation on Sept. 13.

During the course of yesterday's Senate debate, I secured a commitment from Chairman Stevens that the Homeland Security Appropriations conference report will be the vehicle to provide this additional disaster aid from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as well as any assistance necessary to respond to Ivan. As this conference proceeds, I hope you and Chairman Stevens will be able to provide the \$1 billion or more that our delegation has requested for agriculture because the viability of Florida's agricultural industry and the health of the state's economy are at stake.

It's good to know that we'll have a Floridian co-chairing this conference, and I stand ready to provide any assistance I can as you move forward to help our state get all the hurricane relief it so desperately needs.

Sincerely,

